

What is claimed is

1. A method of storing green bananas, the method comprising
 - 5 (A) providing a sealed package comprising
 - (a) a sealed container, and
 - (b) within the sealed container, the green bananas and a packaging atmosphere around the green bananas; the sealed container providing a pathway for O₂ and CO₂ to enter or leave the packaging atmosphere; and
 - (A) storing the sealed package in a controlled atmosphere which contains (i) less than 18% O₂, and (ii) more than 2% O₂.
2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the controlled atmosphere during at least part of step (B) contains 4 to 12% O₂ and is at a temperature between 14 and 18 °C.
3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the controlled atmosphere during at least part of step (B) contains 5 to 9% O₂ and is at a temperature between 14 and 18 °C.
4. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the sealed package has an O₂ permeability such that, during at least part of step (B), the O₂ content of the packaging atmosphere is between 2 and 3.5%.
- 25 5. A method according to Claim 1 which includes
 - (C) after step (B), exposing the exterior of the sealed package to a second controlled atmosphere which contains exogenous ethylenic ripening agent, thereby ripening the bananas.

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6. A method according to Claim 5 wherein during at least part of step (C) the second controlled atmosphere is a mixture of air and exogenous ethylene.
7. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
- 5 (i) the sealed package provided in step (A) contains a latent source of exogenous ethylenic ripening agent;
- (ii) at least the initial part of step (B) is carried out under conditions such that the latent source is not activated;
- (iii) the controlled atmosphere during at least part of step (B) contains 4 to 12% O₂ and is at a temperature between 14 and 18 °C.; and
- (iv) the method includes activating the latent source of exogenous ethylenic ripening agent, thereby ripening the bananas.
8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein the sealed package has an O₂ permeability such that, during at least part of step (B), the O₂ content of the packaging atmosphere is between 2 and 3.5%.
9. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the package contains 16-22 kilograms of bananas, and the sealed container has an O₂ permeability at 13 °C. per kg of bananas in the package (OP13/kg), of at least 1500 ml/atm.24 hrs.
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10. A method according to Claim 9 wherein the sealed container has an R ratio at 13 °C of at least 3, and an ethylene permeability at 13 °C. per kg of bananas in the package (EtOP13/kg) which is at least 3 times the OP13/kg of the container.
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11. A method of storing and ripening bananas, the method comprising
- (A) providing a sealed package comprising
- (a) a sealed container, and
- (b) within the sealed container, (i) green bananas and (ii) a packaging atmosphere around the green bananas;
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the sealed container comprising at least one atmosphere control member which (i) provides a pathway for O₂, CO₂ and ethylene to enter or leave the packaging atmosphere, and (ii) comprises a microporous polymeric film and a polymeric coating on the microporous film;

5 (B) storing the sealed package in a controlled atmosphere which, during at least part of step (B), contains 4 to 12% O₂ and is at a temperature between 14 and 18 °C., the sealed package having an O₂ permeability such that, during at least part of step (B), the O₂ content of the packaging atmosphere is between 2 and 3.5%; and

(C) exposing the green bananas, while they are in the sealed container, to exogenous ethylenic ripening agent, thereby ripening the green bananas.

12. A method according to Claim 11 wherein at least part of step (C) comprises exposing the exterior of the sealed package to a second controlled atmosphere which contains exogenous ethylenic ripening agent.

13. A method according to Claim 12 wherein during at least part of step (C) the second controlled atmosphere is a mixture of air and exogenous ethylene.

20 14. A method according to Claim 13 wherein at least part of step (B) is carried out while the sealed package is on a ship, and step (C) is carried out on land after the package has been unloaded from the ship.

15. A method according to Claim 11 wherein

- 25 (i) the sealed package provided in step (A) contains a latent source of exogenous ethylenic ripening agent;
- (ii) at least the initial part of step (B) is carried out under conditions such that the latent source is not activated;
- (iii) step (C) includes activating the latent source of exogenous ethylenic ripening agent.

16. A method according to Claim 11 wherein at least part of step (B) and at least part of step (C) are carried out while the sealed package is on a ship.

5 17. A method according to Claim 11 wherein the package contains 16-22 kilograms of bananas, and the sealed container has an O₂ permeability at 13 °C. per kg of bananas in the package (OP13/kg), of at least 1500 ml/atm.24 hrs.

10 18. A method according to Claim 17 wherein the sealed container has an R ratio at 13 °C of at least 3, and an ethylene permeability at 13 °C. per kg of bananas in the package (EtOP13/kg) which is at least 3 times the OP13/kg of the container.

15 19. A shipping or trucking container which contains a plurality of sealed packages, each of the sealed packages comprising

- (a) a sealed container, and
(b) within the sealed container, (i) 16-22 kilograms of bananas which have passed their climacteric and (ii) a packaging atmosphere around the bananas which includes exogenous ethylene or the residue of exogenous ethylene; the sealed container providing a pathway for O₂, CO₂ and ethylene to enter or leave the packaging atmosphere.

20 25 20. A shipping or trucking container according to Claim 19 wherein each of the plurality of sealed packages comprises a sealed container comprising at least one atmosphere control member which (i) provides a pathway for O₂, CO₂ and ethylene to enter or leave the packaging atmosphere, and (ii) comprises a microporous polymeric film and a polymeric coating on the microporous film.

21. A sealed package comprising

- (a) a sealed container, and

- (b) within the sealed container, (i) bananas which have passed their climacteric and (ii) a packaging atmosphere around the bananas which includes exogenous ethylene or a residue of exogenous ethylene;
- the sealed container comprising at least one atmosphere control member which
- 5 (i) provides a pathway for O₂, CO₂ and ethylene to enter or leave the packaging atmosphere, and (ii) comprises a microporous polymeric film and a polymeric coating on the microporous film; and
- the sealed container having an O₂ permeability at 13 °C. per kg of bananas in
- 10 the package (OP13/kg), of at least 1500 ml/atm.24 hrs and an R ratio at 13 °C of at least 3.